

(Mr. KIND asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, we have no objections in regards to this legislation. We encourage its adoption and passage.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the New Mexico Water Planning Assistance Act (H.R. 1711).

The New Mexico Water Planning Assistance Act (H.R. 1711) would assist the state of New Mexico with the development of comprehensive state water plans that will help the state more effectively manage our most precious natural resource—water.

I introduced the New Mexico Water Planning Assistance Act on April 19, 2005 and Senator DOMENICI and Senator BINGAMAN introduced companion legislation in the Senate on January 26, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation directs the Secretary of the Interior to: (1) provide to New Mexico technical assistance and grants for the development of comprehensive State water plans; (2) conduct water resources mapping in New Mexico; and (3) conduct comprehensive studies of groundwater resources in New Mexico to assess the quantity, quality, and interaction of groundwater and surface water resources.

The legislation also directs the Secretary, subject to the availability of appropriations, to allocate: (1) \$5 million to develop hydrologic models of eight New Mexico river systems; (2) \$2.5 million to complete the hydrologic models for the San Juan River and other Southwest New Mexico river systems; and (3) \$4.5 million for statewide digital orthophotography mapping. The federal cost share shall be on a 50–50 match basis, and all federal funds are to be non-reimbursable.

Chaco Canyon in northwestern New Mexico was the home to many indigenous southwestern peoples from A.D. 850 to 1250. Unfortunately, the Chacoans ingenuity in storing and channeling water was not enough to save them from a 50-year drought that began in 1130. The Chacoan pueblo people left Chaco Canyon in stages and established a string of pueblos along the Rio Grande and a few other desert rivers.

Mr. Speaker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and state conservancy and irrigation districts flood control and reclamation projects along New Mexico's river systems that store water during wet years for use during dry years help ensure that New Mexico's current population will not have to relocate during extended periods of drought—like the Chacoans were forced to do more than eight centuries ago.

However, like much of the West, the demands on New Mexico's ground and fresh water resources are immense and growing. For example, Mr. Speaker, the First Congressional District of New Mexico is bisected by the Rio Grande. The flows of the Middle Rio Grande serve the biggest city in New Mexico, Albuquerque, many smaller cities, six Indian pueblos, and a network of agriculture users. Many of these farmers irrigate the same land as their Spanish ancestors did over 4 centuries ago. In addition there is the endangered silvery minnow, which, under a 2003 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion, requires 180 miles of continuous minimum river flow in the Middle Rio Grande.

New Mexico has an average allotment of 393,000 acre-feet of Rio Grande water under the 1938 interstate compact that apportions the Rio Grande between Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico. These demands have stretched this allotment to the limit. Further complicating the picture is the fact that Article VII of the Rio Grande Compact severely restricts New Mexico's ability to store native water up stream at Heron, Abiquiu, El Vado, or Cochiti Reservoir.

Thus far, New Mexico's water managers have been able to stretch New Mexico limited water supplies to meet the expanding demands of New Mexico cities, industries, Indian pueblos, and endangered species, without widespread displacement of its historical agriculture users. By providing federal water planning assistance to New Mexico's water managers this important legislation will help stretch New Mexico's limited water resources; and, as a result, will help prevent waters conflict in New Mexico well into the future.

In closing, I want to thank Chairman POMBO, Subcommittee Chairman RADANOVICH, and their staffs for working so hard on legislation. I particularly wanted to thank Water and Power Subcommittee staff members Kiel Weaver, Lane Dickson, and Michael Correia for there work on this bill. I also wanted to thank Nate Gentry, who works on Senator DOMENICI's Energy and Natural Resources staff, and was instrumental in helping draft this important piece of legislation. I also wanted to thank New Mexico Interstate Stream Commissioner Estaban Lopez who made the trip to Washington D.C. to testify in support of this legislation before the House Resources Subcommittee on Water and New Mexico and State Engineer John DAntonio who testified on the Senate companion legislation in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. They both do an excellent job overseeing and managing New Mexico most precious natural resource—water. I also want to thank Office of the State Engineer General Counsel DL Sanders and Interstate Stream Commission General Counsel Tanya Trujillo for their work on this legislation.

I am very pleased that the legislation is going to be voted on by the full House of Representatives so that this legislation can come one step closer to becoming law and New Mexico can come one step closer to getting much needed federal assistance with its water planning efforts.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1711, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

LONG ISLAND SOUND STEWARDSHIP ACT OF 2006

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill

(H.R. 5160) to establish the Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5160

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Long Island Sound Stewardship Act of 2006”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) Long Island Sound is a national treasure of great cultural, environmental, and ecological importance;

(2) 8,000,000 people live within the Long Island Sound watershed and 28,000,000 people (approximately 10 percent of the population of the United States) live within 50 miles of Long Island Sound;

(3) activities that depend on the environmental health of Long Island Sound contribute more than \$5,000,000,000 each year to the regional economy;

(4) the portion of the shoreline of Long Island Sound that is accessible to the general public (estimated at less than 20 percent of the total shoreline) is not adequate to serve the needs of the people living in the area;

(5) existing shoreline facilities are in many cases overburdened and underfunded;

(6) large parcels of open space already in public ownership are strained by the effort to balance the demand for recreation with the needs of sensitive natural resources;

(7) approximately 1/3 of the tidal marshes of Long Island Sound have been filled, and much of the remaining marshes have been ditched, diked, or impounded, reducing the ecological value of the marshes; and

(8) much of the remaining exemplary natural landscape is vulnerable to further development.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to establish the Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative to identify, protect, and enhance upland sites within the Long Island Sound ecosystem with significant ecological, educational, open space, public access, or recreational value through a bi-State network of sites best exemplifying these values.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act, the following definitions apply:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

(2) ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—The term “Advisory Committee” means the Long Island Sound Stewardship Advisory Committee established by section 8.

(3) REGION.—The term “Region” means the Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative Region established by section 4(a).

(4) STATE.—The term “State” means each of the States of Connecticut and New York.

(5) STEWARDSHIP.—The term “stewardship” means land acquisition, land conservation agreements, site planning, plan implementation, land and habitat management, public access improvements, site monitoring, and other activities designed to enhance and preserve natural resource-based recreation and ecological function of upland areas.

(6) STEWARDSHIP SITE.—The term “stewardship site” means any area of State, local, or tribal government, or privately owned land within the Region that is designated by the Administrator under section 5(a).

(7) SYSTEMATIC SITE SELECTION.—The term “systematic site selection” means a process of selecting stewardship sites that—

(A) has explicit goals, methods, and criteria;

(B) produces feasible, repeatable, and defensible results;

(C) provides for consideration of natural, physical, and biological patterns;

(D) addresses replication, connectivity, species viability, location, and public recreation values;

(E) uses geographic information systems technology and algorithms to integrate selection criteria; and

(F) will result in achieving the goals of stewardship site selection at the lowest cost.

(8) **QUALIFIED APPLICANTS.**—The term “qualified applicant” means a non-Federal person that owns title to property located within the borders of the Region.

(9) **THREAT.**—The term “threat” means a threat that is likely to destroy or seriously degrade a conservation target or a recreation area.

SEC. 4. LONG ISLAND SOUND STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE REGION.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established in the States of Connecticut and New York the Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative Region.

(b) **BOUNDARIES.**—The Region consists of the immediate coastal upland areas along—

(1) Long Island Sound between mean high water and the inland boundary, as described on the map entitled “Long Island Sound Stewardship Region” and dated April 21, 2004; and

(2) the Peconic Estuary as described on the map entitled “Peconic Estuary Program Study Area Boundaries” and included in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for the Peconic Estuary Program and dated November 15, 2001.

SEC. 5. DESIGNATION OF STEWARDSHIP SITES.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Administrator may designate a stewardship site in accordance with this Act any area that contributes to accomplishing the purpose of this Act.

(b) **PUBLICATION OF LIST OF RECOMMENDED SITES.**—The Administrator shall—

(1) publish in the Federal Register and make available in general circulation in the States of Connecticut and New York the list of sites recommended by the Advisory Committee; and

(2) provide a 90-day period for—

(A) the submission of public comment on the list; and

(B) an opportunity for owners of such sites to decline designation of such sites as stewardship sites.

(c) **OPINION REGARDING OWNER'S RESPONSIBILITIES.**—The Administrator may not designate an area as a stewardship site under this Act unless the Administrator provides to the owner of the area, and the owner acknowledges to the Administrator receipt of, a comprehensive opinion in plain English setting forth expressly the responsibility of the owner that arises from such designation.

(d) **DESIGNATION OF STEWARDSHIP SITES.**—Not later than 150 days after receiving from the Advisory Committee its list of recommended sites, the Administrator—

(1) shall review the recommendations of the Advisory Committee; and

(2) may designate as a stewardship site any site included in the list.

SEC. 6. RECOMMENDATIONS BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Advisory Committee shall—

(1) in accordance with this section, evaluate applications—

(A) for designation of areas as stewardship sites;

(B) to develop management plans to address threats to stewardship sites; and

(C) to act on opportunities to protect and enhance stewardship sites;

(2) develop recommended guidelines, criteria, schedules, and due dates for the submission of applications and the evaluation

by the Advisory Committee of information to recommend areas for designation as stewardship sites that fulfill terms of a multi-year management plan;

(3) recommend to the Administrator a list of sites for designation as stewardship sites that further the purpose of this Act;

(4) develop management plans to address threats to stewardship sites;

(5) raise awareness of the values of and threats to stewardship sites;

(6) recommend that the Administrator award grants to qualified applicants; and

(7) recommend to the Administrator ways to leverage additional resources for improved stewardship of the Region.

(b) **IDENTIFICATION OF SITES.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Any qualified applicant may submit an application to the Advisory Committee to have a site recommended to the Administrator for designation as a stewardship site.

(2) **IDENTIFICATION.**—The Advisory Committee shall review each application submitted under this subsection to determine whether the site exhibits values that promote the purpose of this Act.

(3) **NATURAL RESOURCE—BASED RECREATION AREAS.**—In reviewing an application for recommendation of a recreation area for designation as a stewardship site, the Advisory Committee may use a selection technique that includes consideration of—

(A) public access;

(B) community support;

(C) high population density;

(D) environmental justice (as defined in section 385.3 of title 33, Code of Federal Regulations (or successor regulations));

(E) open spaces; and

(F) cultural, historic, and scenic characteristics.

(4) **NATURAL AREAS WITH ECOLOGICAL VALUE.**—In reviewing an application for recommendation of a natural area with ecological value for designation as a stewardship site, the Advisory Committee may use a selection technique that includes consideration of—

(A) measurable conservation targets for the Region; and

(B) prioritizing new sites using systematic site selection, which shall include consideration of—

(i) ecological uniqueness;

(ii) species viability;

(iii) habitat heterogeneity;

(iv) size;

(v) quality;

(vi) open spaces;

(vii) land cover;

(viii) scientific, research, or educational value; and

(ix) threats.

(5) **DEVIATION FROM PROCESS.**—The Advisory Committee may accept an application to recommend a site other than as provided in this subsection, if the Advisory Committee—

(A) determines that the site makes significant ecological or recreational contributions to the Region; and

(B) provides to the Administrator the reasons for deviating from the process otherwise described in this subsection.

(c) **SUBMISSION OF LIST OF RECOMMENDED SITES.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—After completion of the site identification process set forth in subsection (b), the Advisory Committee shall submit to the Administrator its list of sites recommended for designation as stewardship sites.

(2) **LIMITATION.**—The Advisory Committee shall not include a site in the list submitted under this subsection unless, prior to submission of the list, the owner of the site is—

(A) notified of the inclusion of the site in the list; and

(B) allowed to decline inclusion of the site in the list.

(3) **PUBLIC COMMENT.**—In identifying sites for inclusion in the list, the Advisory Committee shall provide an opportunity for submission of, and consider, public comments.

SEC. 7. GRANTS AND ASSISTANCE.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Administrator may provide grants, subject to the availability of appropriations, and other assistance for projects to fulfill the purpose of this Act.

(b) **FEDERAL SHARE.**—The Federal share of the cost of an activity carried out using any assistance or grant under this Act shall not exceed 60 percent of the total cost of the activity.

SEC. 8. LONG ISLAND SOUND STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established a committee to be known as the “Long Island Sound Stewardship Advisory Committee”.

(b) **MEMBERSHIP.**

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Administrator may appoint the members of the Advisory Committee in accordance with this subsection and the guidance in section 320(c) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 D.S.C. 1330(c)), except that the Governor of each State may appoint 2 members of the Advisory Committee.

(2) **ADDITIONAL MEMBERS.**—In addition to the other members appointed under this subsection, the Advisory Committee may include—

(A) a representative of the Regional Plan Association;

(B) a representative of marine trade organizations; and

(C) a representative of private landowner interests.

(3) **CONSIDERATION OF INTERESTS.**—In appointing members of the Advisory Committee, the Administrator shall consider—

(A) Federal, State, and local government interests and tribal interests;

(B) the interests of nongovernmental organizations;

(C) academic interests;

(D) private interests including land, agriculture, and business interests; and

(E) recreational and commercial fishing interests.

(4) **CHAIRPERSON.**—In addition to the other members appointed under this subsection, the Administrator may appoint as a member of the Advisory Committee an individual to serve as the Chairperson, who may be the Director of the Long Island Sound Office of the Environmental Protection Agency.

(5) **COMPLETION OF APPOINTMENTS.**—The Administrator shall complete the appointment of all members of the Advisory Committee by not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(A) **VACANCIES.**—A vacancy on the Advisory Committee—

(i) shall be filled not later than 90 days after the vacancy occurs;

(ii) shall not affect the powers of the Advisory Committee; and

(iii) shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment was made.

(c) **TERM.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—A member of the Advisory Committee shall be appointed for a term of 4 years.

(2) **MULTIPLE TERMS.**—An individual may be appointed as a member of the Advisory Committee for more than 1 term.

(D) **POWERS.**—The Advisory Committee may hold such hearings, meet and act at such times and places, take such testimony, and receive such evidence as the Advisory Committee considers advisable to carry out this Act.

(e) **MEETINGS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Advisory Committee shall meet at the call of the Chairperson, but no fewer than 4 times each year.

(2) INITIAL MEETING.—Not later than 30 days after the date on which all members of the Advisory Committee have been appointed, the Chairperson shall call the initial meeting of the Advisory Committee.

(3) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the Advisory Committee shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number of members may hold hearings.

(f) ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Advisory Committee shall use an adaptive management framework to identify the best policy initiatives and actions through—

(A) definition of strategic goals;
(B) definition of policy options for methods to achieve strategic goals;
(C) establishment of measures of success;
(D) identification of uncertainties;
(E) development of informative models of policy implementation;

(F) separation of the landscape into geographic units;

(G) monitoring key responses at different spatial and temporal scales; and

(H) evaluation of outcomes and incorporation into management strategies.

(2) APPLICATION OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK.—The Advisory Committee shall apply the adaptive management framework to the process for making recommendations under subsections (b) through (f) of section 6 to the Administrator regarding sites that should be designated as stewardship sites.

(3) ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT.—The adaptive management framework required by this subsection shall consist of a scientific process—

(A) for—
(i) developing predictive models;
(ii) making management policy decisions based upon the model outputs;
(iii) revising the management policies as data become available with which to evaluate the policies; and
(iv) acknowledging uncertainty, complexity, and variance in the spatial and temporal aspects of natural systems; and
(B) that requires that management be viewed as experimental.

(g) TERMINATION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—The Advisory Committee shall terminate on December 31, 2011.

SEC. 9. REPORTS.

(a) ADMINISTRATOR.—The Administrator shall publish and make available to the public on the Internet and in paper form—

(1) not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, a report that—

(A) assesses the role of this Act in protecting the Long Island Sound;

(B) establishes in coordination with the Advisory Committee guidelines, criteria, schedules, and due dates for evaluating information to designate stewardship sites;

(C) includes information about any grants that are available for the purchase of land or property rights to protect stewardship sites; and

(D) accounts for funds received and expended during the previous fiscal year;

(2) an update of such report, at least every other year; and

(3) information on funding and any new stewardship sites more frequently than every other year.

(b) ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—

(1) REPORT.—For each of fiscal years 2007 through 2011, the Advisory Committee shall submit to the Administrator and the decisionmaking body of the Long Island Sound Study Management Conference established under section 320 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330), an annual report that contains—

(A) a detailed statement of the findings and conclusions of the Advisory Committee since the last report under this subsection;

(B) a description of all sites recommended by the Advisory Committee to the Administrator for designation as stewardship sites;

(C) the recommendations of the Advisory Committee for such legislation and administrative actions as the Advisory Committee considers appropriate; and

(D) in accordance with paragraph (2), the recommendations of the Advisory Committee for the awarding of grants.

(2) RECOMMENDATION FOR GRANTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Advisory Committee shall recommend that the Administrator award grants to qualified applicants to help to secure and improve the open space, public access, or ecological values of stewardship sites, through—

(i) purchase of the property of a stewardship site;

(ii) purchase of relevant property rights to a stewardship site; or

(iii) entering into any other binding legal arrangement that ensures that the values of a stewardship site are sustained, including entering into an arrangement with a land manager or property owner to develop or implement a management plan that is necessary for the conservation of natural resources.

(B) EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.—The Advisory Committee shall exert due diligence to ensure that its recommendations result in an equitable distribution of funds between the States.

SEC. 10. PRIVATE PROPERTY PROTECTION; NO REGULATORY AUTHORITY.

(a) ACCESS TO PRIVATE PROPERTY.—Nothing in this Act—

(1) requires any private property owner to allow public access (including Federal, State, or local government access) to the private property; or

(2) modifies the application of any provision of Federal, State, or local law with regard to public access to or use of private property, except as entered into by voluntary agreement of the owner or custodian of the property.

(b) LIABILITY.—Establishment of the Region does not create any liability, or have any effect on any liability under any other law, of any private property owner with respect to any person injured on the private property.

(c) RECOGNITION OF AUTHORITY TO CONTROL LAND USE.—Nothing in this Act modifies the authority of Federal, State, or local governments to regulate land use.

(d) PARTICIPATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS NOT REQUIRED.—Nothing in this Act requires the owner of any private property located within the boundaries of the Region to participate in any land conservation, financial or technical assistance, or other programs established under this Act.

(e) PURCHASE OF LAND OR INTEREST IN LAND FROM WILLING SELLERS ONLY.—Funds appropriated to carry out this Act may be used to purchase land or interests in land only from willing sellers.

(f) MANNER OF ACQUISITION.—All acquisitions of land under this Act shall be made in a voluntary manner and shall not be the result of forced takings.

(g) EFFECT OF ESTABLISHMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The boundaries of the Region represent the area within which Federal funds appropriated for the purpose of this Act may be expended.

(2) REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—The establishment of the Region and the boundaries of the Region do not provide any regulatory authority not in existence immediately before the enactment of this Act on land use in the Region by any management entity, except for such property rights as may be purchased from or donated by the owner of the property (including public lands donated by a State or local government).

SEC. 11. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2011 to carry out this Act, including for—

(1) acquisition of land and interests in land;

(2) development and implementation of site management plans;

(3) site enhancements to reduce threats or promote stewardship; and

(4) administrative expenses of the Advisory Committee and the Administrator.

(b) USE OF FUNDS.—Amounts made available to the Administrator under this section each fiscal year shall be used by the Administrator after reviewing the recommendations included in the annual reports of the Advisory Committee under section 9.

(c) AUTHORIZATION OF GIFTS, DEVISES, AND BEQUESTS FOR SYSTEM.—In furtherance of the purpose of this Act, the Administrator may accept and use any gift, devise, or bequest of real or personal property, proceeds therefrom, or interests therein, to carry out this Act. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude, if such terms are considered by the Administrator to be in accordance with law and compatible with the purpose for which acceptance is sought.

(d) LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Of the amount available each fiscal year to carry out this Act, not more than 8 percent may be used for administrative costs.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would urge my colleagues to support this legislation, sponsored by Congressman ROB SIMMONS, which would establish the Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative. This initiative allows the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to provide grants to protect and restore land around the Long Island Sound in the States of Connecticut and New York. This bill acknowledges the collaborative efforts among the many public and private partners in the region and allows for a ground-up approach to managing and maintaining the long-term ecological health and public enjoyment of Long Island Sound.

I urge an "aye" vote on H.R. 5160.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to one of the chief sponsors and leaders of this important piece of legislation, my good friend and distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL).

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Wisconsin for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman POMBO and Ranking Member RAHALL for bringing this bill to the floor today. I also want to thank my colleague from Connecticut, Representative SIMMONS, and the rest of the members of the Long Island Sound Caucus for their very hard work on this legislation and their ongoing efforts to preserve and protect the Long Island Sound. I have the privilege of serving

as co-chair of the Congressional Long Island Sound Caucus with the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS) and we have worked together for many years in the hope that this bill would become a reality. I was proud to introduce it with the gentleman from Connecticut, and I am proud of the Long Island Caucus for standing behind it every step of the way.

This bill is bipartisan. It is bicoastal. It is bicameral. It is one of the most important initiatives that we can take to protect the Long Island Sound, to identify and enhance sites with ecological, educational, and recreational value in Connecticut and New York. And it does so in a way that is consistent with the vision put forward by a consortium of local groups who have been working for over a decade to save the sound.

The Long Island Sound is one of our Nation's great natural wonders. It sustains a diversity of birds, wildlife, and marine organisms. It is a very important part of the national economy. It remains a vital component of our identity, our way of life.

Today over 8 million people live in the sound's watershed and 20 million people live within 50 miles of its shores. The sound alone contributes \$5 billion to the regional economy through sport and commercial fishing, recreation and tourism.

Mr. Speaker, I served for 8 years as a member of the Huntington Town Board, and I worked with our local baymen and worked with different organizations to preserve the Long Island Sound, and I am acutely aware of the many environmental challenges that confront our community. In fact, my town and many others initiated bond acts, asking local taxpayers to come up with a few more dollars to support and protect the Long Island Sound. And I always believed that the Federal Government should be more of a partner with local townships. And tonight we take the first big step in that new partnership.

This bill creates a purely voluntary process to protect coastal areas along the Long Island Sound. It creates a process that will bring together stakeholders on a committee, including Connecticut and New York representatives from the Federal Government, the State government, local governments, nongovernment organizations, academic, private and development interests. This is a critically important step.

And, Mr. Speaker, before I close, I just want to mention that, in fact, this bill has been the product of cooperation at all levels of government with advocacy groups in both New York and Connecticut, and I am grateful to all of them for their input.

On a personal note, I have been very fortunate to have a wonderful staff for working on this legislation for most of the last 4 years. And I want to thank Karen Agostisi, who devoted so much of her time to this effort and helped

navigate this bill through the sometimes choppy and turbulent waters of the Long Island Sound. I was privileged to work with the gentleman from Connecticut.

This is a very important step for this Federal and local partnership. I urge a "yes" vote on this bill. And again I thank the gentleman for his cooperation. I thank my colleagues for their consideration.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. KIND asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I want to again commend my good friend from New York (Mr. ISRAEL) for his leadership that he has shown on this piece of legislation. It has been many years that they have been working on this. But I also want to take a moment to commend my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from New York, TIM BISHOP, for the leadership and the work that he has put into this legislation; along with the gentlewoman from Connecticut, ROSA DELAURO, who has also been very involved; as well as 15 original cosponsors, Democratic cosponsors, from the New York delegation.

I urge an "aye" vote on this important bill to restore and preserve the Long Island Sound and encourage its adoption this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, understanding the full risk of filibuster, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Connecticut, the sponsor of the bill, Mr. SIMMONS.

(Mr. SIMMONS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

We have already heard many good words about this legislation, and I would like to associate myself with those words.

Quite simply, this legislation represents many years of effort between two States, New York and Connecticut; between the House and the Senate; and, of course, a bipartisan effort by Republicans and Democrats.

The Long Island Sound is a unique estuary, with economic and environmental assets. It generates about \$6 billion annually to the regional economy and is a cherished environmental resource for over 28 million people who live within 50 miles of the shore.

Four generations of my family have enjoyed Long Island Sound, and we have lived on Long Island Sound. And yet with the increase in population, with land development, and other pressures, some of the assets of this unique estuary are being lost. And that is why this bipartisan legislation has been introduced.

It originally passed the Senate a couple of years ago in a somewhat different form and then Senator

LIEBERMAN and I reintroduced it last year at the beginning of the 109th Congress. I have worked with Chairman POMBO, I have worked with subcommittee Chairman GILCREST, and my colleagues across the aisle to make sure that the language of this bill respects property rights but also allows us to use science-based mechanisms to identify properties that can be acquired and preserved and protected for future generations.

Again, we don't infringe on property rights because the bill seeks to create and does create, we believe, a purely voluntary process to protect important sites along the sound.

The committee that we are creating is advisory in nature and has no authority to seize lands or to mandate action on private property. It simply recommends sites and allows an administrator to allocate funds to purchase or enter into legal arrangements to secure these properties. The legislation provides for transparency and accountability and is responsible, in a fiduciary manner, for the dollars that are authorized by the law.

I thank my colleagues for their bipartisan support of this wonderful piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 5160, the "Long Island Sound Stewardship Act of 2006."

I want to thank Chairman RICHARD POMBO and Chairman WAYNE GILCREST—as well as their capable staff—for their leadership and work on this important legislation. I also would like to thank my co-chair of the Long Island Sound Caucus, Representative STEVE ISRAEL and the rest of the caucus for their work to promote the importance of Long Island Sound.

The Long Island Sound is a unique estuary with economic and ecological importance to the region and to the Nation. The Sound contributes approximately \$6 billion annually to the regional economy and is a cherished resource for the 28 million people living within 50 miles of its shores. The Sound is heavily used for recreation and for commerce by residents of Connecticut and New York as well as numerous visitors from across the country each year. This treasure deserves our utmost support.

Senator LIEBERMAN and I originally introduced the Long Island Stewardship Act (LISSA) in the 108th Congress. H.R. 5160 is the product of bipartisan cooperation among legislators from Connecticut and New York and local groups that have been working together to protect the Sound. Without infringing on private property rights of local landowners, the bill seeks to create a purely voluntary process to protect important sites along the Sound through the creation of the Long Island Sound Advisory Committee. Chaired by the director of the Environmental Protection Agency's Long Island Sound Office and comprised of representatives from Federal, State, and local governments and nongovernmental organizations, the Committee will assess potential stewardship sites along the coast and work to preserve them.

To ensure private property rights, the Committee was made advisory in nature and would not have the authority to seize lands or to mandate action on private property. Instead,

the Committee would be required to recommend sites for stewardship and submit its findings to the EPA Administrator. The Administrator would then allocate funds to purchase relevant property rights or enter into binding legal arrangements that ensure the value of the sites is maintained in accordance with the Committee's recommendations.

In an effort to provide maximum transparency and accountability, the EPA Administrator would then be required to produce a bi-annual report that assesses the status of the Long Island Sound and that notifies the public of the program activities. To maintain the bi-state partnership, the Committee would be required to exert due diligence to ensure that it recommends an equitable distribution of funds between Connecticut and New York.

Mr. Speaker, the use of Federal dollars requires careful scrutiny. My bill would authorize \$25 million annually for 5 years to advance this important initiative. This figure represents a reduction from an initial draft of the bill during the 108th Congress, at the recommendation of Senate and House committee chairmen. And if we consider the precedent for Federal funds authorized and appropriated for estuarine ecosystem restoration programs elsewhere in the country, we'll find \$25 million to be an appropriate amount. This is especially true when one considers the cost of real estate in the Long Island Sound region.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for bringing this legislation before the House. I am gratified to have the support of my colleagues in passing this bill.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, as an original cosponsor of this legislation, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5160, the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act. I recognize the vital role the Long Island Sound plays in the Fourth Congressional District as well as all of Connecticut.

The Long Island Sound contributes more than \$5 billion annually to the regional economy and is one of the most populated and visited areas of our country. In fact, approximately 10 percent of the American population lives within the Long Island Sound watershed.

It is a source of livelihood, nourishment, and recreation for many in Connecticut and elsewhere, and it is critical that we treat it well.

This legislation would authorize \$25 million to protect and preserve areas along the Sound's shorelines with significant ecological, recreational, or educational value. The Long Island Sound Stewardship Act gives those most familiar with the Sound's precious and diverse resources the tools necessary to continue their conservation efforts, and applies the most effective methods available to identify, protect, and enhance sites with ecological, educational, and recreation value in Connecticut and New York.

Protecting and preserving the environment is one of the most important jobs I have as a Member of Congress. We simply will not have a world to live in if we continue our neglectful ways.

The Long Island Sound is our Yellowstone. I urge passage of this legislation so that we may continue its conservation and protection.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation, which will help ensure that future generations of New Yorkers and all Americans will enjoy a clean, well-preserved Long Island Sound.

The Long Island Sound is critically important to our Nation and vital to the health and well-

being of the communities I represent. As an Estuary of National Significance, the Sound provides habitat for a wide array of plant and animal life, and contributes an estimated \$5.5 billion to the regional economy from boating, fishing and tourism-related commerce. Boating and fishing are deeply enmeshed in the culture and traditions of Long Island, and the Sound has long been our region's gateway to the seas.

Unfortunately, the effects of millions of people living adjacent to the Sound's shore have been profound. At the turn of the millennium, lobster catch rates plummeted by 90%, costing our local economy between \$30 and \$50 million. Dangerous levels of toxins continue to threaten the well-being of the Sound's diverse habitats and wildlife breeding areas, as well as the livelihoods of those who depend on these resources for their livelihood.

The Long Island Sound Stewardship Act supplements conservation and preservation efforts along the shoreline of Long Island and Connecticut, and authorizes \$25 million in federal appropriations over the next 4 fiscal years.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is not perfect. I strongly support and will continue to advocate for funding at the original proposed level of \$40 million annually. Properly conceived, the legislation should include wetlands and underwater lands within the authority of the Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative, which will be established by this legislation. Additionally, I strongly support fully funding conservation and preservation offshore via the Long Island Sound Restoration Act, which has fallen victim to the Majority's budget cuts.

The Long Island Sound, however, is a national treasure and I believe that any preservation efforts to conserve any part of the Sound should be embraced. I do support this legislation and I would like to thank my colleague from New York, the co-chair of the Long Island Sound Caucus, Mr. ISRAEL, for all of his efforts to bring this bill to the floor and to preserve the Long Island Sound.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, appreciating the bipartisan nature of this, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5160, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

UTAH RECREATIONAL LAND EXCHANGE ACT OF 2006

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2069) to authorize the exchange of certain land in Grand and Uintah Counties, Utah, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2069

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Utah Recreational Land Exchange Act of 2006".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) the area surrounding the Colorado River in Grand and San Juan Counties, Utah, and Dinosaur National Monument and the Book Cliffs in Uintah County, Utah, contains nationally recognized scenic vistas, significant archaeological and historic resources, valuable wildlife habitat, and outstanding opportunities for public recreation that are enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people annually;

(2) the State of Utah owns multiple parcels of land in the area that were granted to the State under the Act of July 16, 1894 (28 Stat. 107, chapter 138), to be held in trust for the benefit of the public school system and other public institutions of the State;

(3) the parcels of State trust land are largely scattered in checkerboard fashion amid the Federal land comprising the area of the Colorado River corridor, the Dinosaur National Monument, and the Book Cliffs;

(4) the State trust land in the area of the Colorado River corridor, Dinosaur National Monument, and the Book Cliffs includes significant natural and recreational features, including—

(A) portions of Westwater Canyon of the Colorado River;

(B) the nationally recognized Kokopelli and Slickrock trails;

(C) several of the largest natural rock arches in the United States;

(D) multiple wilderness study areas and proposed wilderness areas; and

(E) viewsheds for Arches National Park and Dinosaur National Monument;

(5) the large presence of State trust land located in the Colorado River corridor, Dinosaur National Monument, and the Book Cliffs area makes land and resource management in the area more difficult, costly, and controversial for the United States and the State of Utah;

(6) although the State trust land was granted to the State to generate financial support for public schools in the State through the sale or development of natural resources, development of those resources in the Colorado River corridor, Dinosaur National Monument, and the Book Cliffs area may be incompatible with managing the area for recreational, natural, and scenic resources;

(7) the United States owns land and interests in land in other parts of the State of Utah that can be transferred to the State in exchange for the State trust land without jeopardizing Federal management objectives or needs; and

(8) it is in the public interest to exchange federally owned land in the State for the Utah State trust land located in the Colorado River Corridor, Dinosaur National Monument, and the Book Cliffs area, on terms that are fair to the United States and the State of Utah.

(b) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act to direct, facilitate, and expedite the exchange of certain Federal land and non-Federal land in the State to further the public interest by—

(1) exchanging Federal land that has limited recreational and conservation resources; and

(2) acquiring State trust land with important recreational, scenic, and conservation resources for permanent public management and use.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) FEDERAL LAND.—The term "Federal land" means the land located in Grand, San